

Girl Captures Prize Snake of Expedition to Restock Bronx Zoo

Curator Ditmars Brings Many Interesting Specimens From Southern Swamps, but None Finer Than Big Rattler Caught by His Daughter Gladys

By HERBERT ASBURY.

WHEN Raymond L. Ditmars and Charles E. Snyder, curator and head keeper, respectively, of the New York Zoological Park—which is the polite name for the Bronx Zoo—went down into the Great River cypress swamp of South Carolina, forty miles up the Savannah River, a few weeks ago to bag enough snakes, alligators and toads and things like that to replenish the stock of the zoo, they made their home and headquarters in an old abandoned cabin on the reservation of the Pine Land Club, which is composed of a group of New York business men who like the wild and the wild of nature—and there is nothing wilder or more weird than a cypress swamp, with its blasted stumps of trees, its dead and dismal vegetation and its long reaches of wet, mushy sand.

The abandoned cabin was in the most weird portion of that weird country and it was dirty. Mrs. Ditmars and her daughters, Gladys and Beatrice, went along with the snake hunters to see that they kept their feet dry and had plenty to eat. The first day they had the cabin she decided it needed a thorough housecleaning. This she and her two daughters started to give it, while Mr. Ditmars and Mr. Snyder went out into the swamp to look over what was to be their hunting ground for the next two or three weeks, or until they had captured enough snakes to fill the empty places in the snake dens of Bronx Park.

The Piccaninny Finds a Monster.
The sixth member of the snake hunting expedition was a dirty, ragged little negro boy who rejoiced in the appellation of George Washington Jackson something or other—none of the Ditmars ever knew his last name. George Washington Jackson was a sort of general factotum and all around servant. He carried, before the expedition was over, everything from snakes to buckets of water, although he never carried a snake that he didn't protest vigorously and with much rolling of his big eyes. George Washington Jackson helped in the way and driving a few toads and innumerable cockroaches from the safe haven of the cabin into the dangers of the swamp, and finally Mrs. Ditmars got the idea that a big huckleberry pie would be a fine thing to offer her husband and Mr. Snyder when they came back from their first snake hunt. Swamps in that section literally swarm with wild berry patches, which is one of the reasons why it is such a good place for snakes, and there was a little huckleberry patch right out in the front yard, not fifteen feet from the door of the cabin.

"George Washington Jackson," said Mrs. Ditmars, "you get a bucket and go out and pick enough huckleberries for a pie."

So George Washington Jackson got his bucket and out he went. Inside the house, for a few minutes, the three women could hear the huckleberries plunking against the bottom of the boy's bucket, and they could hear George Washington Jackson crouching on the ground, sniffing the air and sniffing the air.

But in about ten minutes they heard the slightest roar of fright that ever issued from the throat of a little dapper, then the crash of the bucket as George Washington Jackson "lost it from him, and the next instant a very frightened little negro dashed into the cabin and plunged head first into a table.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Ditmars.

"Lawdy massy!" exclaimed George Washington Jackson. "I done almost but my foot right on the biggest snake thov is in the whole world! They is a snake out in dat berry patch bigger'n what a elephant is big!"

"No, mam!" said George Washington Jackson, positively, "I aint goin' no near dat snake! Dat's the biggest rattlin' snake in the whole wide world!"

Once the snake was safely under the box Gladys Ditmars calmly stamped on it, driving the sides of the box into the soft sand and effectually preventing the escape of the snake. Then she went back into the cabin and resumed her sweeping, which George Washington Jackson had interrupted. When her father came back to the cabin with Mr. Snyder she told him of her capture. He laughed.

"A diamond back rattler," he said, "is principally what we came down here for. That you should catch one

in our front yard is too good to be true."

But she finally convinced him, and he and Mr. Snyder went out to bag the snake and put him away where he would be safe until time to take him back North and put him in his permanent home in the zoo.

It takes two men to snare a venomous snake and the work is interesting. Each man has a pole, one of them with a wire noose on the end of it. This noose is slipped over the snake's head, preventing his wriggling away, and then the second man takes his pole and presses down the head of the snake. Then, with the reptile securely pinned to the ground, he seizes the snake behind the head with his hand. He must be careful to get the snake right behind the ears, as it were, so that the reptile cannot move his head either way enough to sink his fangs into the man's hand. Then the man holding the snake lifts him high in the air so that his full length is off the ground, and the other man opens a canvas bag underneath the reptile.

As the snake goes into the air there is an instant during which he fixes his body and draws himself up to strike. That is the instant in which he must be dropped into the bag. This is done quickly, the quicker the better, and the instant the snake sinks into the bag the man holding the bag gives it a quick twist and a twist. If this is done properly the body of the snake drops to the bottom of the bag and the capture is complete. The bag is then tied just above the squirming snake and another snake then may be put in the top half of the bag. Two venomous snakes, however, are not usually put in the same bag, nor, unless there is a shortage of bags, is a harmless snake put into a bag with a venomous reptile. There is always danger that one will bite through the canvas or burp and kill the other, although such instances are rare.

Mr. Ditmars and Mr. Snyder put the snakes they caught in muslin bags about three feet deep. A snake could easily bite through the cloth. On one occasion Mr. Snyder bagged a

A WHIP
SNAKE
FOOT LONG

AN ALLIGATOR ABOUT TO PLUNGE INTO A "GATOR HOLE"

HUNTING ALLIGATORS IN A CYPRESS SWAMP IN SOUTH CAROLINA

THE CABIN IN FRONT OF WHICH GLADYS DITMARS CAUGHT A DIAMOND BACK RATTLER. GLADYS IS IN THE CENTER OF THE PICTURE.

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Sidis, the Boy Wonder, Turns Bolshevik

FOND parents who were shocked

a few years ago at reading of

the graduation from Harvard

of William James Sidis, son of Prof.

Boris Sidis, a psychologist, at the

age of 15, and later of his lecturing

on mathematics before a group of

graybeards, stunning them all with

his prodigious knowledge, have now

something new to say about precocity.

The boy wonder was said to be a normal

child, but that any child could so far

outstrip his fellows was rather a

flexion on the O'Reilly and McGil-

luddy offspring who had started even

with him.

When it was reported shortly after

his entrance into Harvard at the age

of 11 that he had been taken ill a

chorus of "I told you so" went up

from the press and public. It was

commonly held that no child could be

healthy who was encumbered with

such an overdose of gray matter.

It was true that as a small child

Sidis did not like to play; but that, it

developed, was due to fear of dogs. He

felt that whenever a dog approached

he must take hold of his mother's

hand, and as his mother could not

constantly be out playing with him

he preferred to stay indoors. Teachers

were annoyed by his elementary

schooling by his impatience with the

things they were laboriously driving

into the polls of his less nimble minded

companions. "I knew that before

Why do you keep saying it?" was his

constant plaint.

Now He's a Bolshevik.

Sidis now at the age of 21 is a

Socialist and an avowed advocate of

Bolshevism. He carried a red flag in

a May day riot at Roxbury, Mass., and

May 13 was sentenced to eighteen

months in the House of Correction,

the judicial allotment being divided

between one year for assault com-

mitted upon a policeman and six

months for rioting. Justice Hayden

sitting in the Roxbury court asked

him if he believed in the Soviet form

of Government, and his reply was

affirmative.

"Do you believe in God?" asked the

Justice of the prodigy.

"Not in the kind of God that is the

boas of Christianity," Sidis answered.

"Do you believe in the American

flag?"

"In certain ways."

To another question he said he be-

lieved in the American form of gov-

ernment "to the extent of the Decla-

ration of Independence."

The witness stated that the Soviet

ideals do not necessarily imply vio-

lence. Political Socialists, he said, be-

lieve mainly in the ballot and the Bol-

sheviki in control of industry. The

red in the red flag, Sidis asserted,

stands for the common blood of

humanity, as it does in the American

flag.

Sidis was then put through a cross

examination and admitted that he

claimed exemption from the draft be-

cause of conscientious objections. In

redirection examination he said he

did not believe in force. He denied that

he had said, "To hell with the Ameri-

can flag," adding that he never used

such language.

After sentence had been pronounced

the young prodigy appealed his case

and was held in \$5,000 bonds for the

Superior Court.

Prof. Boris Sidis, who claimed full

credit for the unusual mental develop-

ment of the boy which he began when

his son was 2 years old in 1911, pre-

pared an attack on the whole educa-

tional system. He argued that the

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